

A New Bill drawn up by a Committee of Grievances, in Reply to the Ladies and Batchelors Petition and Remonstrance, &c.

Virgins and Batchelors, or rather Ladies and Gentlemen (for that is your safer name, and so we would advise you to title your selves) we have received both your Addresses, and both your Suits lye before us. We confess that, to do you equal right, you both plead strongly, and pray heartily: However, the fervour of the Suppliant does not always argue the honesty of the Petition. The most unreasonable most unjust things in the World may be as vigorously pray'd for as the best. A man in his angry moments may as zealously wish to see his honest Neighbour hang'd, as he ever wish'd in a fit of Sickness to be sav'd. The same Tradesmans Wife that at Morning Service cou'd think of nothing but *Abrahams* bosom, before night perhaps has alter'd her note, and pray'd with greater vehemence to meet her Gallant.

The Merit therefore, and not the Oratory of the Plea is the business of our Examination. But before we descend to particulars, we must so far joyn with you, to own your Cause (that we may use your own phrase) a matter of the greatest consequence that ever came within our Walls. For *Hymen and Love, Generation and Progeny*, the fulfilling of the great first Commandment, *Increase and Multiply*, is indeed an Importance so high, that not only the present Race of Mankind, the now occupants of the World, but even the yet unborn are concerned in it.

Having therefore duly weigh'd the whole Controversie between the Petitioners and Remonstrancers, we must declare our ready tenderness, and without partiality, favourable Inclinations both to the Complaint, and Complainants, the aggrieved Petitioners. For having consider'd, that long Customs out of the memory of man, are by the *British* Constitution equivalent to the most binding Laws; we find upon search that *England* has been always the *Heaven of Women*, and also by another customary female Claim, that a *Woman never loses her Honor*; and consequently that the practis'd Deference and Complaisance to the Sex is an unalienable Right: Upon the said premises duly consider'd, as we sit here not to destroy Fundamentals, but to support 'em, we must allow a great many unquestion'd Prerogatives as their just and natural Right; a fair *Magna Charta* on the soft Sexes side.

Nevertheless, not to come to any Conclusive Determination, *Causa inaudita*, we think it highly consistent with our own Honour and Justice to discuss the main points in dispute between the *Ladies* and *Batchelors*, before we come to any final decision on either side.

First, then we cannot but take notice that the Batchelors very unjustly charge the Petitioners with *Difficult Courtship*; the pretended Servitude of tedious *Jacob-Practiceships*, &c. being in the whole a most notoriously false and malicious suggestion. For how can any man in his right wits believe that ten thousand *Green-sickness Maidens*, subscribers to the Petition, can be those hard-hearted *Now Rack*

Mistresses

Mistresses (as if Life, Health and Love were so little dear to them) that they would rather dye Martyrs to Oatmeal, Loam and Chalk, than accept such able Doctors and such pleasant Physick for their Recoveries; in that only *Elixir Vita, Min* and *Matrimony*.

Nay, do not the whole Body of Petitioners most frankly and generously avow (both for their Majesties and the Nations Service) their ready Inclinations and Desires of recruiting the yearly *Flandrian* Mortality, by an immediate Consummation and Propagation. Is not the fair *Festival-sheet* hung out, with all the heartiest Bridal Compliment, of *Wake Sleepers, rise and eat*? And can the ungrateful Bachelors talk of *Seven years Courtship* after such indearing Invitations! But however, if by chance, once in an Age, they meet with a *thick-shell'd bitter Almond*, must the Generality of the Sex, the *tenderer Pistacheros*, requiring not half the cracking labour, and with ten times the sweeter Kernel, be falsely reproacht and reviled?

And whereas the Bachelors ridiculously object their fear and dread of entering into the Matrimonial state, from the suggested Frailty and *Briuteness* of the weaker *Vessels*: to obviate the folly of that Fear, and the shallowness of that argument, we declare, *Nemine contradicente*, the fair Sex, (not to diminish their value) to be true precious *Porcelaine*, and it lies only in the gentle usage and tenderness of the handling, to preserve 'em.

And we farther declare this Petition of the longing Ladies, notwithstanding the scurrilous Bachelors ridiculing and censorious Reflections, to be as honest a Supplication, as a *Prayer for daily Bread*: for every Thing would live.

And whereas one great Bar to Matrimony, are the common pretensions of Good Husbandry, in choosing rather to buy at *Hackney*, than keep a *Milcher of their own*; as thereby endeavouring to avoid the Expensive Concomitants of Wedlock. Now as these unthinking Remonstrancers never consider the dangerous Risques of their own *Latitudinarian* principles and practices, in incurring the hazard of coming to *Sassafrilla* and *Gutacuu*, and the rest of the *dry Drugs*, infinitely more expensive than the objected Matrimonial Sweet-meats and Caudles, Gossippings and Christnings, &c. the Confectioners a much easier than the Apothecaries Bill, and one *Dr. Wall* a heavier incident charge than two *Chamberlains*.

We therefore think fit to lay before their Eyes the too common and too threatening malevolence of those malignant Ascendants, viz. *Venus* in the lower House, and *Mercury* in the upper one; and withal advise 'em to reflect that the Nursery of a whole *Fire-side* is not half the expence of rearing of *gallping Runners* into *standing Goutts*. We could likewise further convince 'em, that the universal havock of all the *Mayms* and *Cripples*, from *French Chain-shot* and Splinters got betwixt Wind and Water, is much the vaster Hospital Rent-charge, than the Pensions of *Chelsey* and *Chartham*.

However, if no Counsel nor Precept can reduce 'em from their infamous Reprobation to the honourable state, we hereby enact this punishment of their Apostacy, That they live in their sin, and dye in their shame; and as the last publick brand, be utterly debar'd even that common Civility of bribing the Searchers, and softening the Bill of Mortality, by slurring a *shame-lac'd Consumption* upon a scandalous *Ret*.

But to begin our Examination into the Petitioners greatest and lowdest-tong'd Grievance, the *Multitude of Misses*; and all the fatal Influences from those reigning Ascendants; that not only (as the Petitioners modestly complain) *divers*, but (as we may safely add) *poysen* those wholesome streams which would otherwise run in the regular Channel of Matrimony; we shall here subjoyn our Power and Authority

Authority for accomplishing a thorough Reformation in this particular; with the following Inflictions and Punishments for the discouragement and suppression of the said notorious Vice and Enormity.

Whereas therefore, to the scandal of the Age, it has been too often experienced, that witty and beautiful Spouse has been abandon'd for hard favour'd dowdy Miss; under no other shadow of excuse, than the pretended discovery of having found a *Fiddle* abroad, and therefore slighting the unmusical Instrument at home; Now in utter detestation of such abominable pretences, and such unnatural Conjugal-Abdication; together with the manifest Justice of *Lex Talionis*, we do hereby *License* and *Authorize* the aforesaid fair Abandon'd (as well for the Alleviation of doleful Widow'd nights, and Virgin sheets; as for the support of the Family, possibly in no small danger from such neglect and Desertion) to borrow the Assistance of some dignified Younger Brother, to raise Heirs, &c. without incurring the *Premunire* of Elopement; or upon Non-Readiness and Failure of such honourable supply, to have free leave to take up with some courser Domestick Menial, though but to the homely Tune of *Drive on Coachman*.

And in like manner 'tis Resolved and Order'd, That all those *Ravblers* and *Strays* under that misleading *Ignis Fatuus*, the sweet sin of *Variety*, that shall therefore grasp at ourlying *Pluralities*, though possibly, naturally so weak-gifted, as to be scarce sufficiently qualified for due Incumbence at home, shall for the said wilful offence of Non-Residence, incur the Penalty of *Sequestration*, to be supply'd by a *Curate*, from the choice of the *Parish*.

And whereas the fair Complainants too loudly inveigh against their powerful Rival *Wine*, and the present too spreading Idolatry of the Bottle, and the dangerous concomitants thereof; which the Batchelor's endeavour to soften and sweeten, by insinuating the Juice of the Grape no ill-meaning Enemy to the God of Love's Subjects: For adjustment of the Dispute, be it resolved, That *Wine* be no farther encouraged than as *Amoruth satihlus*, a good Servant but a bad Master; to be indulg'd and cherisht as a moderate Grace-cup, to make Love chirp, but not sleep; and be used for Sawce and Relish, not for Sowse and Pickle. Be it therefore enacted, That for due punishment of those violent Claret-hunters, that by abuse of this lawful and limited Indulgence, do outrun all bounds, to the making a toy of a pleasure, and a tedious tiresome Fox-chase of it; it may and shall be lawful for the sweet neglected *Vetus*, like the old modest *Diana*, to punish all such capital offenders with the Front of an *Alceon*; it being the opinion of this Committee, that the wilful neglect of Family Duty, and all false measures of due Benevolence fall as justly under *Parliamentary* Censure and Lash, as the false picking of *Butter*.

And whereas the crying shame of the daily scandalous Rhimes, the licentious scurrilous Pamphlet Doggrel and Playhouse Farce upon the holy state of Matrimony, is no small Grievance of the Petitioners. This Honourable Committee, as fully empower'd to search Papers and Records, have found the said Libels to be wholly matter of Malice and Calumny, the generality of the Authors being either some scribbling, aspiring, slighted pretender to some fair disdainful *Celis*; and therefore in pure spite and revenge, pelted and persecuted with Satyr and Lamppoon, for no other sin but her being deaf and invincible to Ditty and Sonnet; and thereupon the whole Honourable state of Wedlock, maliciously vilified, with the outcry of *dry meat*, for no other reason but that themselves are thrown out of the Chase, and excluded the Game: Or otherwise if such Wedlock-railling be the Venome and Gall of any martyr'd Author, we conclude it the product of some very hard Bargain, as possibly some old-tapp'd leaky Broach at home, and thereupon

upon his Pallat, wholly depraved and fow'd with this nauseous Draught of Lee^d. Nevertheless all the said villanous Ribaldry and Libels, as hatched and contrived for sowing Sedition and fomenting Schism within the peaceable and united Ecclesiastical Provinces of *Hymen* and *Lous*, we do hereby adjudge and sentence to the old doom of *Heretico Comburendo*.

And whereas our fair Petitioners enforce their Suit, from our condescension to the humble Debates of cutting the Rivers *Lug* and *Wye*, &c. Be it therefore Resolved and Ordered accordingly, That the present *Virgin Shallows*, hitherto of no farther use than the driving a poor Watermill, &c. be dug into Deeps and Channels, and made Navigable for Traders and Voyagers, and so render'd useful to the publick for the serviceable bearing of Bulk and Burthen.

Provided still, that all the fair Bridal pretenders shall bring their whole Loaf to the Spousal Board, and not have any of the Kissing Crust pared off by any hungry Sharper for Breakfast, before the good man in Black has said Grace for the Nuptial-night Supper, with the rest of the usual Ceremonies of *Fall to in Gods Name*.

But if by any frail mischance, an unhappy falling Fair, under pretence of a pure untoucht Domestick Utensil, shall bring a craz'd Pipkin into play; she shall be obliged by a true and thorough Reformation, and Engagement of her future more steady Uprightness, to give good Security that a crackt Maidenhead, like a broken Bone, shall be strongest where 'tis set again, or otherwise to forfeit all Right and Benefit of our favour and protection.

Lastly, be it order'd, in favour to the Petitioners propos'd Supply towards recruiting the humane dearth and scarcity made by the hungry Devourer *War*, That a Clause be inserted to root out of all the Female Physick-gardens, and indeed from out the whole Commonwealth, those dangerous Plants call'd *Cover-shame*, alias *Savine*, and other *anti-conceptive* Weeds and Poysons, those notorious Restoratives of slender Shapes, and tender Reputation, to the loud and crying shame of *Love lost*, and a *Good Thing* thrown away.

As for what relates to the Chaplains, we are willing to allow 'em plenty of Meat, Drink and Tobacco, the most zealous part of their Supplication; nay, to sit down at Table with their Patrons, provided they don't take upon them to censure the management of the Family. But whereas they petition to be freed from any obligation to marry the Chamber-maid; we can by no means assent to it; the *Abigail* by immemorial custom being a *Deodand*, and belonging to Holy Church.

We thank the Poets for their good will to the Government, as appears by their Proposal to raise a fund of 600000*l.* for the support of it; but don't think it convenient to raise any Money either out of them, or the Ribbon weavers. The only Tax we lay upon them is to Canonize all our Heroes that dye in *Flanders*, and to record their Victories in Verse. And this will be no burthensome employment for them.

And lastly, as for the Widdows, provided they'll engage never to talk bawdy, and quote the sayings, or praise the valour of their dead Husbands, we will grant all and every Clause in their Petition, viz. The old Widdows shall have their Gums rubb'd with Coral. The rich shall be indulg'd a twelvemonths rest. The poor shall have the forfeitures they beg for; and the young receive full satisfaction in their three Articles.

